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ABSTRACT

Recognizing increasing concerns about rising youth-related crime in Missouri, this Kids Count report on children and violence examines the impact of community and family violence on young perpetrators and victims, and explores characteristics of successful programs to prevent or reduce family and community violence in Missouri. Data suggest that youth violence is associated with high poverty areas, drug and alcohol use, and the volume of violence in mass media. Schools face a growing challenge in meeting students' educational needs as problems of violence spill over into classrooms. Successful violence prevention programs, while diverse in activities, methods, and leadership structure, provide safe places to learn nonviolent coping skills, problem solving, assertiveness, and leadership. These programs need support and involvement of diverse community groups. The home remains the most dangerous place for children, with the number of families in which abuse or neglect has been substantiated increasing. There is a strong correlation between poverty and abuse/neglect rates. Parental characteristics correlated with abusive behavior include a punitive family of origin, substance abuse, immaturity, inability to delay gratification, inappropriate expectations for children, lack of child development knowledge, and social isolation. Successful programs to prevent or treat family violence build on individual strengths and address individual needs, connect families with support, services, and resources to meet basic needs, and recognize that violence is focused on gaining control over others. The report concludes that it is the responsibility of Missouri citizens to restore safety to children's homes and communities. (KB)

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A Report on Children and Violence

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KIDS COUNT in Missouri is a four-year project sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to improve the well-being of Missouri's Children. KIDS COUNT in Missouri increases the visibility of the condition of children and promotes policy and programmatic change through reports, advocacy, public education and community organization.

Citizens for Missouri's Children is a statewide advocacy organization serving as an independent voice for children on those issues, policies, and government programs that affect their lives and about which they cannot speak for themselves.

NO SAFE PLACE

KIDS COUNT Report on Children and Violence

Citizens for Missouri's Children

April 1995

A Note About Data

The KIDS COUNT in Missouri project uses data provided by a wide variety of national and state agencies. The Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis at the University of Missouri has been a particularly valuable source of information.

In spite of the cooperation and assistance of many agencies, finding reliable data on children and violence remains a difficult challenge. Especially lacking are measures of violence in the home, including the real rate of domestic violence and sexual abuse. We also lack systematic data about the number of child abuse victims who later require treatment at substance abuse or mental health facilities or who enter the juvenile justice system. In addition, there are also significant gaps in our knowledge about the incidence of trauma-related injury and the number of youth victims of violent crime. Although agencies such as the Missouri Highway Patrol and various state departments have made enormous improvements in their collection of data in recent years, more data collection and analysis are still needed.

In spite of these problems, we have tried to provide the most complete picture possible with the information currently available. Examining the rate, causes, and effects of violence is not simply an intellectual exercise. As we increase our understanding of children's experience of violence, we improve our ability to respond effectively, with compassion and healing.

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Executive Summary

Concern about rising youth-related crime is growing in both urban and rural areas. Increasing numbers of young people both commit violent crimes and are the victims of crime. In Missouri, the number of law violations referred to the juvenile courts more than doubled between 1983 and 1992. Homicide was the number one cause of death for 15 to 19 year old male Missourians in 1993.

High crime and other social problems often overlap. Data suggest that high-poverty areas frequently have unusually high levels of youth violence. Youth from impoverished environments turn to violence as a remedy for powerlessness. When few positive alternatives or resources exist, criminal activities can provide excitement, status, and financial gain. Drug and alcohol use contribute to an unsafe environment for juveniles and are associated with more negative behaviors and increased violence among juveniles. The volume of violence in mass media, and its glorification, both mirror and shape our society.

Schools face a growing challenge in meeting the educational and social needs of their students. The problems of the streets spill over into classrooms, and violence within schools has increased significantly. No school, regardless of its location or its relative wealth, is immune to the problem of violence within its walls.

Successful violence prevention programs are remarkably diverse in activities, methods, and leadership structure. These programs provide safe places in which children can learn nonviolent ways of coping. The programs change behavior by teaching problem solving, assertiveness, conflict resolution and other positive communication skills, and by empowering youth to participate in leadership activities. Violence prevention programs must address the concerns of individual communities. The support and involvement of diverse community groups is critical to their success.

Despite increasing crime rates and decreasing safety in many communities, the unfortunate truth is that the home remains the most dangerous place for a child. The number of families in which abuse/neglect has been substantiated has been steadily increasing over the past 5 years, reaching over 18,000 in 1993. Seventy-two percent of the perpetrators of abuse/neglect in 1993 were the child's natural parents.

Domestic violence is another reality which adversely impacts children. The trauma of witnessing violence against a parent takes a physical, emotional, and developmental toll on children. Children in homes in which domestic violence occurs are at risk for abuse from the batterer and may also be injured when attempting to protect their parent. Domestic violence and child abuse have been treated by social service and law enforcement agencies as two separate occurrences. The reality is that they do not exist separately, nor is the impact of violence against adults separate from the violence against children.

Although poverty is not necessarily a cause of child abuse or neglect, the high stress and lack of resources that result from poverty often lead to it. 1994 KIDS COUNT in Missouri data show a strong correlation between poverty and high rates of abuse/neglect.

Recent study cites evidence that "punitive family of origin" is the parental characteristic most strongly correlated with current abusive behavior. Boys who grow up in violent households are statistically more likely to become batterers than boys from nonviolent homes, and female incest victims are at increased risk for victimization by their partners as adults.

Substance abuse frequently plays a role in child abuse and domestic violence. In 1992, a majority of the states reported that substance abuse was a major problem for families who had been reported for abuse/neglect. Other family characteristics which contribute to family violence are parental immaturity, an inability of parents to delay gratification, inappropriate expectations for children, lack of knowledge of child development, and social isolation.

Family violence can be prevented and treated. Successful programs build on individual strengths and address individual needs. They connect families with support and services to promote emotional health, and also with the tangible resources they need to meet their basic physical needs. Successful programs also recognize that family violence is focused primarily on gaining control over others. It has little to do with love, intimacy, or sexuality.

Thousands of young Missourians risk violence in their neighborhoods, their schools, and their homes. When our children lack basic safety or confidence in the ability of adults to protect them, their ability to imagine and achieve a productive future is lessened. It is the responsibility of each of us to restore safety to Missouri's homes and communities. We have the knowledge to do this. We must now develop the will to make safety a reality.

Introduction

As anyone who listens to the radio, watches television, or reads the newspaper knows, America is becoming a more violent nation every year. Of particular concern is the alarming increase in violence among children and youth, both in our communities and in our homes. The rates of youth-initiated violent crimes are rising dramatically, as are the numbers of young victims. And as violence in our communities escalates, so too does violence within our homes.

The long-term implications of these national trends are ominous, as young people are damaged in ways that make their transition into productive adulthood tremendously difficult, if not impossible.

Sadly, a focused look at Missouri's record reveals that our state is among the most violent. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's 1994 KIDS COUNT Data Book reports that only six states have higher rates of juvenile violent crime arrests.

Although many Missouri leaders have warned of the peril that will befall us if we do not take decisive action to make our state safer, there seems to be little agreement on the way this should be done. This report offers information on national and local violence statistics and practical lessons based on the experiences of many Missourians.

We examine the impact of community violence on young perpetrators and victims and explore some common characteristics of successful programs. Then, we turn our attention toward violent families, the characteristics they often share, and the efforts being made in Missouri to ensure a safe home for every child.

In order to heal the violence that has wrenched apart so many of our communities and families, we must look inside ourselves, as well as outward to our neighbors and leaders, for a cure.

Community Violence and Children

"After years of epidemic poverty, joblessness, racial intolerance, family disintegration, domestic violence, and drug and alcohol abuse, the crisis of children having children has been eclipsed by the greater problem of children killing children."

—Marian Wright Edelman,
Children's Defense Fund

Violence surrounds many of our nation's young people, and violent acts are committed more and more frequently by juveniles. According to the Center for the Future of Children, more than 95,000 youths were incarcerated in the United States in 1994, an increase of more than 20% in less than a decade. Twenty-five percent of these incarcerated youths were held for crimes against persons. The proportion of juvenile arrests to total arrests has also increased sharply, up 27% since 1980 (U.S. Department of Justice, 1992).

Statistics indicate that increases in community violence and increases in juvenile victimization often overlap. Not only are many of our nation's youth caught in a vicious cycle of criminal activity, many are also in danger of losing their lives.

State and national data provide a grim view of juvenile crime rates and the frightening world in which many youth are growing up.

Juveniles and Violence: A National Perspective

A 1992 U.S. Department of Justice report reveals in graphic detail the tragic connection between violence and youth on a national level.

- Twenty-three percent of all crime victims, almost one in four, are juveniles.
- Of the nearly 150,000 rape victims in 1992, one out of five was under 18.
- Homicide is the second leading cause of death among 15 - 24 year olds.
- Between 1984 and 1991, the juvenile homicide rate almost tripled, from 4 to 11 per 100,000.
- One out of five young Americans will have committed a serious violent offense by age 18.

The report also documents that African-American and Hispanic males have the highest rates of violent crime victimization. African-American males between the ages of 16-19 experience a higher rate of victimization than any other age or ethnic group.

Juveniles and Violence: A Missouri Perspective

Such national figures are sobering. Equally sobering is a closer look at our own state. The 1993 Missouri Juvenile Crime Analysis reported that the total number of law violation referrals to Missouri juvenile courts almost doubled between 1984 and 1993. *(See Figure 1.)* Of these

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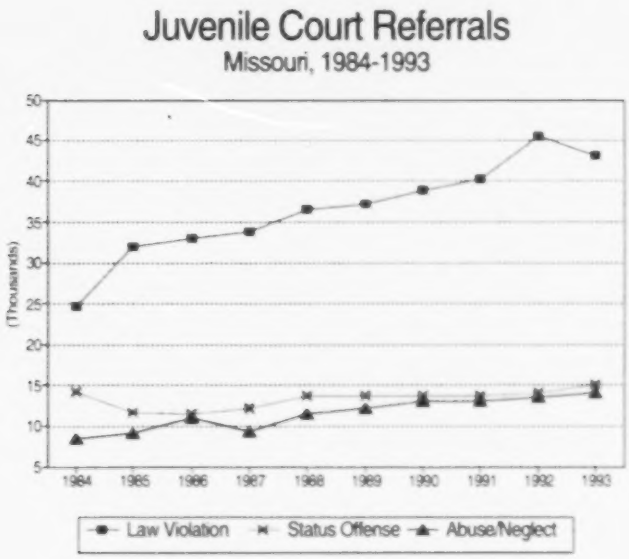
referrals, 11.6% were for violent offenses. In 1993 homicide was the number one cause of fatalities for 15 to 19 year old males.

Figure 1



Other Missouri statistics, these taken from 1992 records, are alarming as well.

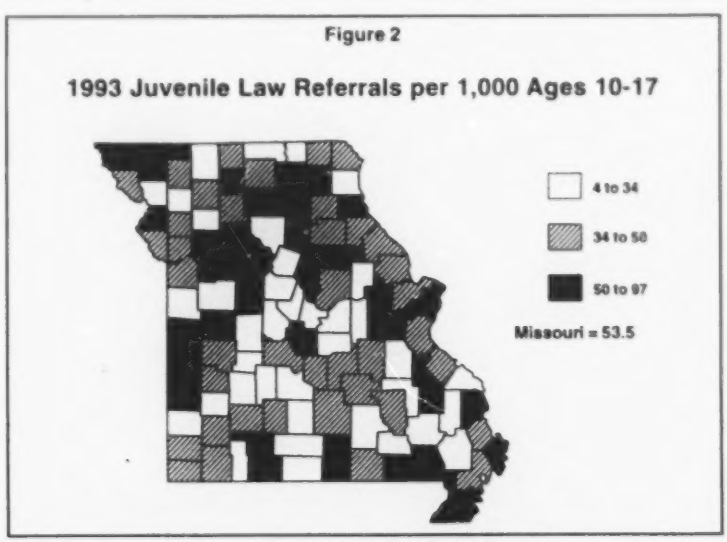
- More than 17% of all those arrested for aggravated assault were juveniles.
- More than 18% of all those arrested for rape were juveniles.
- Of the 471 Missourians arrested for murder, 16.8% were juveniles.

Professor Scott Decker at the University of Missouri-St. Louis reports that in 1994 "five states (California, Florida, New York, Michigan, and Missouri) and the District of Columbia accounted for 50% of all black murder victims aged 15 to 24."

Obviously, juvenile violence impacts some areas of Missouri more severely than others. Although none of the state's 115 counties has been spared the impact of increasing youth violence, some have been particularly hard hit. According to the KIDS COUNT in Missouri 1994 Report, the counties of Mississippi, Marion and St. Louis City had the highest rates (96.9, 93.4, and 90.2 per 1,000 respectively) of law violation referrals among youth age 10 to 17. *(See Figure 2.)*

Although there is value in examining common characteristics of the counties with particularly high juvenile crime rates to identify probable causes of youth violence, the problem is obviously not confined to these counties and the solutions cannot be expected to come from them alone. Youth violence is not constrained by geographic boundaries. Missourians from every part of the state share the responsibility for developing solutions to this critical problem.

Figure 2



Where Youth Violence and Environment Intersect

National and state data reveal areas in which high crime and other social problems overlap. For example, statistics indicate that persons with low incomes are at a higher risk of becoming crime victims. The KIDS COUNT in Missouri 1994 Report reveals an overlap between those counties with the highest juvenile crime rates and those with high rates of poverty. *(See Figure 4, pp. 16-17.)* Gang activity, substance abuse, increased access to guns, and inadequate and unsafe schools also appear to be more prevalent in areas with high criminal activity.

Poverty

"I never had enough money to buy a school lunch . . .We couldn't afford winter shoes. I was cold a lot . . ."

—Adolescent in residential treatment for criminal behavior

While criminal activity has been increasing among juveniles and adults alike, poverty is also at an all time high. Recent data from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (1993) illustrate that the gap between the poor and the wealthy is at its widest point in 25 years. In 1993, 39.3 million people were considered poor; 39.7 million had no health insurance. A recent report by the Children's Defense Fund warned that if present trends continue, 17 million American children will be living in poverty by the year 2001. Though poverty is not by itself a predictor of community violence, data suggest that high-poverty areas frequently have unusually high levels of youth violence. Analysis of 1994 KIDS COUNT in Missouri data indicates that Mississippi and Pemiscot counties and St. Louis City have some of the highest levels of both poverty and youth crime.

Elijah Anderson, a sociologist at the University of Pennsylvania, believes that poor youngsters turn to violence as a remedy for powerlessness. Criminal activity often flourishes in environments that offer few resources or alternative activities for youth. When few job opportunities or role models exist, criminal activities can provide excitement, status, and financial gain.

Gangs

"As I was leaving my house with two other friends I was shot in the back. I thought it was never going to happen to me."

—15 year old girl

According to a Citizens Guide to Street Gangs distributed by the St. Louis County Police, 90% of all male gang members have been arrested by age 18. Ninety-five percent will not finish high school, and 60% are dead or in prison by age 20. The movement of gang activity into a town or neighborhood is often followed by an increase in violent crime.

What is the reward gang behavior brings to juveniles? In the absence of academic and career opportunities, gang membership can provide an identity and a purpose. Gangs also offer protection, camaraderie, and excitement to young people. According to the St. Louis County Police, "Gangs are ego support systems; they are viewed by kids as launch pads to becoming big shots."

- Estimates suggest that almost 5,000 gangs exist nationally providing memberships to a quarter of a million people. In some cities, especially those reporting recent gang problems, 90% of gang members are juveniles (Howell, 1994).
- The average gang member is 17 years old, but their ages can vary between 12-25 years of age (Howell, 1994).
- Gangs are a growing problem throughout Missouri, including rural communities (Ozarks Fighting Back, 1993).
- The St. Louis area alone has more than 120 gangs.

Media Violence

Gang activity accounts for only part of youth crime, however, and it is certainly not the only peer influence that encourages violence. Mass media—television, radio, publications, and films—glorify violence. In the U.S., children watch an average of 28 hours of T.V. weekly. Five violent acts per hour are observable in prime-time programming. Twenty five violent acts per hour are observable in cartoons (Johnston, 1993). While it is true that television violence and aggressive behavior correlate (Center for Media and Values, 1993), one can also argue that T.V., music, gangsta rap, and movie content all mirror the society in which they are created. Artists say that they produce what others are willing to buy. Unfortunately, violence sells well.

Substance Abuse

"My neighborhood is bad, they take drugs and shoot. Last week this man got shot. And got threw under a car and that man got pick up and was put in a bag. My hobby is skating and jump rope."

—Elementary school child

Drug and alcohol abuse can also lead to increased youth violence. When students from 32,000 middle and high schools across the country were evaluated, those using drugs were "more than twice as likely to get into physical fights, three times more likely to be truant from school, and four times more likely to commit vandalism" (Safe 2000 Community Partnership, 1994). Drugs and alcohol contribute to an unsafe environment for juveniles and increased violence among juveniles.

Guns

"My friend had been killed three days before . . . I thought I better carry my gun to protect myself."

—Pre-teen youth

It is illegal for juveniles to purchase firearms. However, many children have access to firearms, and they carry and use these weapons regularly. Many children and families express fears regarding the increased violence in schools and communities. This fear of violence itself increases rates of gun ownership, as youths and adults seek to defend their own safety.

Unfortunately, an increased number of guns often leads to unintentional shootings as well as criminal violence. Nowhere is injury and death by gunfire more observable than in our nation's population of young people.

- Guns were used to kill 222 American children under the age of ten, and 6,795 young people under the age of 25 in 1990 (Children's Defense Fund, 1993).
- 3000 children in the United States under the age of 20 die each year as a result of unintentional gunshot wounds (Coalition for America's Children, 1994).
- According to the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence (1993), 48% of all African-American teenage males who died in 1988 were killed by guns.
- Youth murders that involved guns increased 125% between 1984 and 1990 (Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, 1993).

Inadequate and Unsafe Schools

"We've grown accustomed to violence in the community, but people expect kids to be safe in school."

—Tony Coleman
St. Louis County Police Officer

Children living in high-poverty areas frequently attend schools that are under-funded and ill-equipped to meet their educational and social needs. Increasingly, schools are asked to meet a variety of demands in these communities when often they can barely provide the basics of education. As a result, many young people leave school before graduation because they see no connection between academic effort and future success. Citizens for Missouri's Children has found a strong relationship between rates of poverty and low high school completion rates in Missouri counties. *(See Figure 4, pp. 16-17.)*

"The problems of the streets in urban areas, as teachers often note, frequently spill over into public schools"

—Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities*

As if underfunded and ill-equipped facilities were not enough of an obstacle to learning, kids today are experiencing more and more violence in their schools. No school, regardless of its location or its relative wealth, is immune to this problem.

- School violence has increased significantly over the past five years in nearly 40% of America's cities and towns, according to a 1994 survey of 700 cities by the National League of Cities.
- Large cities claimed that 72% of their school violence was attributable in part to gang activity.
- In 1990, one out of 25 high school students carried a gun (Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, 1993).
- 71 students and teachers nationwide were killed with guns in their schools between the years 1985/86 and 1989/90 (Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, 1993).
- 135,000 guns are brought to school each day (Coalition for America's Children, 1994).

Many schools are taking an active role in reducing violence within their buildings and playgrounds and, ultimately, in their communities. Conflict resolution and peer mediation are included in the curriculum in a number of school districts. Schools have the advantage of being both a place in which skills can be taught and a controlled environment in which those skills can be practiced. Another approach to violence reduction in schools is the "fight-free" school concept. High expectations, school pride, and recognition of success motivate students to refrain from fighting. By giving visible and vocal messages that fighting is not acceptable and by praising students' success in achieving fight-free school days, the social norm is shaped so that fighting is not socially acceptable behavior.

Although these skills are most often taught in middle and high schools, there is a growing recognition that teaching violence prevention to very young children is of critical importance. The Nursery Foundation, a child care provider in St. Louis that has been an anchor for the neighborhood since its founding in 1947, has been in the vanguard of teaching children to change the attitudes and behaviors which contribute to violence. Children ages 3-6 are taught empathy (how to identify and predict the feelings of others), skills in problem solving and resolving conflict without fighting, and ways to reduce their stress and channel angry feelings in positive ways. The Nursery Foundation utilizes the "Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum" in their work with children.

Issues of crime and violence as they relate to juveniles are extremely complex. Many factors correlate with high crime rates, including poverty, negative peer culture, drug and alcohol abuse, ready access to guns, and poor educational opportunity. Successful prevention must take these complexities into account.

Lessons in the Prevention of Youth Violence

"I think a lot of things we do with young people are old-fashioned things. When we spend quality time with people, and give them quality direction, they respond."

—Ruben Chavez.
Youth Development, Inc.,
Albuquerque, NM

Increased media and political attention to youth crime has led policy-makers to propose a variety of solutions to the problem of community violence. Some of these new approaches have proven to be cost-effective and efficient tools in the reduction of community violence. There are many promising "home grown" efforts here in Missouri. These violence prevention programs are remarkably diverse in their program activities, methods, and leadership structure. However, certain characteristics are shared by all successful programs.

➲ Safety

Some children's neighborhoods, schools, and families are so threatening that children turn to violence as the only practical way they know to protect themselves. Children need safe places in which they can mature and learn nonviolent ways of coping.

➲ Positive Alternatives

It is not enough to tell children what not to do. Successful behavior change requires new skills and the confidence to use them. Successful programs teach problem-solving, assertiveness, conflict resolution, and other interpersonal skills.

➲ Youth Empowerment

Young people not only participate in violence prevention, but also assist in program development and leadership. Their vision of a healthy community is valued.

➲ Community Support

The agenda and focus of violence prevention programs must address the concerns of the community. Program leaders should seek the support and involvement of as many diverse community groups as possible. The needs of neighborhood residents, not policy makers, should shape the program.

The search for effective violence prevention has influenced the development of many Missouri youth programs. There are dozens of initiatives in this state that exemplify effective violence prevention. We have chosen to highlight Kansas City's Squash It! Campaign and Springfield's Inter-Agency Task Force on Gangs and Youth Violence as two of the state's most creative programs.

Squash It! Program Partnership for Children, Kansas City

"Children are the conscience of a community."

—Partnership for Children

The Kansas City metropolitan area received a grade of "F" in the area of Safety and Security in the Partnership for Children's 1994-95 Report Card. Every day in the Kansas City area, 49 violent crimes occur; each year, 26 teenagers are killed (Partnership for Children, 1994).

In order to raise the "grade" in the Kansas City area, the Partnership for Children has initiated a unique program to teach young people alternatives to violence. Called "Squash It!," the program was developed at the Harvard University School of Public Health.

To reinforce the cultural message of Squash It!, Kansas City youth and their adult allies are working on the following goals:

1. Opening 30 Kansas City area schools for safe after-hours activities.
2. Preparing youth trainers to teach conflict resolution.
3. Negotiating job opportunities for youth.
4. Providing adult role models for 30,000 teens.

The campaign promotes the use of the "Squash It!" slogan and a simple hand signal: a modified time-out signal with the palm of a flat hand coming down onto a vertical clenched fist. These are intended to empower young people to find non-violent solutions to potentially violent situations.

The program's impact will be measured through the Safety and Security outcomes, including rates of violent crime and child abuse and neglect, examined by the Partnership for Children in its annual Report Card.

Inter-Agency Task Force on Gangs and Youth Violence, Ozarks Fighting Back, Springfield

"We are beginning to realize that youth gangs are not just a problem for the police and schools to solve. This is OUR problem and we must challenge each other to cooperate and to share information."

—Ozarks Fighting Back

Although popular mythology links gangs with large, minority, inner-city populations, a marked increase in gang activity is occurring in smaller cities. The Springfield area has been one community affected by this trend. Weapons offenses, gang graffiti and vandalism, and crimes of intimidation and harassment have plagued Springfield over the past five years.

The Inter-Agency Task Force on Gangs and Youth Violence was convened in 1992, with the purpose of educating community members about gangs and mobilizing a broad sector of the community to work for prevention. Since its initiation, the task force has been staffed by Ozarks Fighting Back, an anti-drug initiative funded by the U.S. Office for Substance Abuse Prevention and the United Way of the Ozarks.

Because it has sought broad representation from community residents and leaders, the task force has compiled an impressive record of success in just three years.

1. It drafted an ordinance, subsequently passed by the Springfield City Council, requiring that graffiti be reported to the police and that landowners remove it from their property within ten days.
2. A 1993 Graffiti Paintout resulted in the cleanup of over 35 sites.
3. A Gang Awareness Manual for Citizens was printed, and 4000 copies were distributed. The manual contains sections on history and identification, as well as practical advice for parents.

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Family Violence and Children

"Remember that the principal training ground for violence remains the family."

—James Garbarino,
Cornell University

Despite frightening crime rates and increasing numbers of juvenile violent offenders, the unfortunate truth is that the home remains the most dangerous place for a child. Thousands of Missouri's children suffer abuse at the hands of caretakers each year, and many more witness the horror of domestic violence. And whether family violence is committed against a child or a parent, the trauma to the family is devastating.

In order to develop methods to make the home a safe place for Missouri's children, we need to be fully aware of the problem, both in terms of the kinds of violence children experience at home and the rate at which it is happening. We also need to examine the characteristics most often found in violent families and in the communities that surround them.

Child Abuse and Neglect

"Everybody who's ever loved me has hit me all the time. How do I know they love me if they don't hit me?"

—Teenager in residential care

In 1993, 18,238 Missouri children were victims of child abuse and neglect. The number of children in families with substantiated child abuse and neglect has been steadily increasing over the past five years. *(See Figure 3.)*

A child's natural parents are the most frequent perpetrators of child abuse. Seventy-two percent of 1993 substantiated perpetrators in Missouri were natural parents of the abused child. Paramours and stepparents combined make up an additional 14% of perpetrators. Though about 60% of all child abuse and neglect perpetrators are female, 77% of sexual abuse perpetrators are male (Missouri Department of Social Services, 1994).

Figure 3

Figure 4

Juvenile Crime and Associated Risk Factors in Missouri Counties[1]

County	1993 Rates					1993 Rankings				
	Juvenile Crime[2]	Poverty[4]	Abuse/ Neglect[5]	Births to Single Teens[6]	H. School Completion[7]	Juvenile Crime	Poverty	Abuse/ Neglect	Births to Single Teens	H. School Completion[8]
ADAIR	**54.7**	**25.8**	**17.6**	**7.1**	**80.8**	**85**	**16**	**85**	**25**	**59**
ANDREW	24.1	25.6	9.9	8.2	88.8	14	15	38	40	19
ATCHISON	**50.8**	**32.5**	**0.8**	**7.8**	**95.7**	**78**	**40**	**1**	**34**	**4**
AUDRAIN	57.2	31.0	9.6	11.1	83.2	90	28	31	87	45
BARRY	**42.4**	**36.4**	**8.4**	**9.8**	**76.1**	**55**	**71**	**28**	**52**	**86**
BARTON	54.3	31.1	17.9	4.1	80.1	83	30	88	4	62
BATES	**53.9**	**35.3**	**11.7**	**11.0**	**86.8**	**82**	**53**	**50**	**86**	**27**
BENTON	20.6	42.1	11.3	7.2	79.0	10	85	46	27	67
BOLLINGER	**15.5**	**36.5**	**6.7**	**8.9**	**85.0**	**8**	**81**	**10**	**56**	**37**
BOONE	81.2	23.6	8.2	8.0	75.4	112	11	20	38	90
BUCHANAN	**63.4**	**33.8**	**11.3**	**15.2**	**83.8**	**97**	**46**	**46**	**108**	**42**
BUTLER	55.0	49.9	17.5	11.3	71.6	86	99	84	91	100
CALDWELL	**20.4**	**38.4**	**19.0**	**7.2**	**84.9**	**9**	**71**	**95**	**27**	**38**
CALLAWAY	44.4	31.5	15.7	8.5	76.1	63	33	74	49	87
CAMDEN	**46.0**	**37.2**	**19.3**	**7.2**	**68.4**	**66**	**66**	**97**	**27**	**107**
CAPE GIRARDEAU	80.4	23.2	7.7	8.4	73.6	110	10	17	48	95
CARROLL	**63.3**	**40.0**	**18.4**	**11.0**	**88.2**	**96**	**80**	**92**	**85**	**23**
CARTER	25.2	57.7	8.2	13.0	76.8	17	110	20	102	80
CASS	**33.5**	**19.9**	**8.7**	**9.7**	**81.3**	**36**	**4**	**22**	**70**	**56**
CEDAR	39.8	35.8	12.1	6.4	77.5	44	56	52	18	75
CHARITON	**14.1**	**33.1**	**6.6**	**8.2**	**95.5**	**6**	**43**	**8**	**40**	**5**
CHRISTIAN	51.5	22.9	12.4	5.2	82.6	80	9	55	14	49
CLARK	**40.3**	**28.8**	**15.4**	**12.9**	**90.7**	**47**	**23**	**72**	**100**	**10**
CLAY	46.6	16.6	7.6	7.0	77.0	68	3	14	23	79
CLINTON	**43.2**	**25.6**	**16.5**	**8.2**	**85.6**	**59**	**16**	**93**	**40**	**30**
COLE	33.2	23.8	9.6	9.1	76.5	35	13	31	62	83
COOPER	**10.4**	**32.9**	**17.2**	**7.1**	**89.9**	**4**	**41**	**82**	**25**	**13**
CRAWFORD	48.6	36.7	12.2	10.1	71.1	73	63	53	75	103
DADE	**24.2**	**46.0**	**19.1**	**7.8**	**89.8**	**15**	**95**	**96**	**34**	**14**
DALLAS	26.9	34.9	7.6	11.3	82.4	21	50	14	91	50
DAVIESS	**38.7**	**50.9**	**9.5**	**10.5**	**86.8**	**42**	**101**	**30**	**80**	**26**
DE KALB	32.6	39.0	5.0	10.9	95.2	33	75	3	83	7
DENT	**41.2**	**36.9**	**8.0**	**11.1**	**77.7**	**52**	**74**	**18**	**87**	**70**
DOUGLAS	26.8	49.4	9.8	10.0	73.5	20	98	35	74	97
DUNKLIN	**80.9**	**52.6**	**33.0**	**18.1**	**73.0**	**111**	**102**	**112**	**112**	**96**
FRANKLIN	53.2	23.7	10.2	8.9	79.9	81	12	40	56	53
GASCONADE	**4.3**	**20.9**	**16.1**	**6.5**	**85.4**	**1**	**6**	**77**	**19**	**33**
GENTRY	50.4	35.2	9.8	4.3	88.5	77	52	35	5	21
GREENE	**50.2**	**28.8**	**16.1**	**8.2**	**76.2**	**75**	**23**	**77**	**40**	**85**
GRUNDY	57.8	36.4	9.7	9.2	77.8	92	60	33	63	69
HARRISON	**24.7**	**44.8**	**23.3**	**4.8**	**89.7**	**16**	**88**	**108**	**9**	**16**
HENRY	58.0	36.5	20.0	9.0	75.3	94	61	98	60	91
HICKORY	**8.9**	**52.8**	**27.7**	**7.0**	**84.4**	**3**	**102**	**109**	**23**	**39**
HOLT	50.2	41.1	8.8	9.3	96.0	75	82	24	66	3
HOWARD	**29.3**	**22.3**	**10.9**	**7.3**	**81.5**	**23**	**38**	**43**	**30**	**54**
HOWELL	55.4	45.8	13.1	8.9	62.1	88	93	59	56	114
IRON	**29.7**	**50.2**	**7.6**	**10.8**	**71.3**	**24**	**100**	**14**	**82**	**101**
JACKSON	41.3	37.7	16.6	12.9	72.7	53	67	81	100	99
JASPER	**25.4**	**31.0**	**17.3**	**9.7**	**83.9**	**18**	**29**	**83**	**70**	**112**
JEFFERSON	42.6	20.1	12.3	8.2	77.3	56	5	54	40	78
JOHNSON	**27.2**	**32.2**	**9.7**	**5.0**	**88.0**	**22**	**36**	**33**	**13**	**24**
KNOX	55.3	44.9	42.3	8.7	97.8	87	89	115	53	1
LACLEDE	**32.8**	**37.0**	**14.3**	**8.3**	**69.8**	**34**	**64**	**65**	**46**	**105**
LAFAYETTE	54.5	29.9	11.1	10.3	85.4	84	26	45	77	32
LAWRENCE	**44.9**	**35.9**	**11.6**	**10.4**	**75.6**	**64**	**58**	**49**	**78**	**89**
LEWIS	30.4	35.8	15.0	10.2	88.4	25	56	71	76	22
LINCOLN	**48.7**	**21.2**	**12.7**	**11.2**	**78.7**	**74**	**7**	**58**	**90**	**81**
LINN	57.3	31.4	13.8	4.7	77.6	91	32	62	11	72

LIVINGSTON	**43.1**	**27.8**	**9.4**	**11.9**	**81.4**	**57**	**20**	**28**	**96**	**56**
MACON	69.6	32.9	8.8	8.5	90.4	103	41	24	49	11
MADISON	**70.3**	**39.8**	**14.1**	**15.0**	**66.5**	**105**	**78**	**64**	**107**	**106**
MARIES	11.5	39.0	6.5	4.8	85.2	5	75	7	12	36
MARION	**93.4**	**35.1**	**14.6**	**9.8**	**77.5**	**114**	**51**	**66**	**72**	**73**
MCDONALD	43.1	47.2	20.3	9.2	66.4	57	96	99	63	110
MERCER	**40.4**	**42.9**	**9.8**	**5.9**	**85.9**	**48**	**87**	**35**	**16**	**29**
MILLER	51.1	38.3	12.0	11.5	79.4	79	68	51	94	65
MISSISSIPPI	**96.9**	**53.6**	**18.0**	**22.3**	**62.7**	**115**	**105**	**89**	**113**	**113**
MONITEAU	26.5	30.5	1.5	8.1	74.5	19	27	2	39	93
MONROE	**46.9**	**31.1**	**14.0**	**10.9**	**88.5**	**69**	**30**	**63**	**83**	**20**
MONTGOMERY	31.4	31.7	14.9	9.0	80.2	30	34	69	60	61
MORGAN	**33.6**	**45.3**	**17.8**	**9.5**	**71.1**	**37**	**90**	**86**	**68**	**102**
NEW MADRID	34.8	54.8	25.3	16.2	81.8	40	107	107	109	52
NEWTON	**38.2**	**34.6**	**14.7**	**8.5**	**74.9**	**41**	**49**	**67**	**49**	**92**
NODAWAY	76.3	33.1	7.3	4.5	96.1	108	43	13	8	2
OREGON	**40.6**	**57.3**	**17.8**	**5.7**	**87.6**	**49**	**108**	**86**	**15**	**25**
OSAGE	6.1	26.0	6.0	2.0	90.1	2	18	5	1	12
OZARK	**23.3**	**54.1**	**14.8**	**9.8**	**84.0**	**13**	**106**	**68**	**72**	**40**
PEMISCOT	71.6	64.2	40.4	27.0	74.4	107	114	114	115	94
PERRY	**31.9**	**28.8**	**8.7**	**14.3**	**67.4**	**31**	**22**	**22**	**105**	**109**
PETTIS	69.6	37.0	13.3	10.4	77.4	103	64	61	78	76
PHELPS	**43.3**	**34.2**	**22.2**	**7.7**	**77.5**	**60**	**47**	**104**	**33**	**74**
PIKE	47.9	28.1	12.5	13.6	83.1	72	21	56	103	47
PLATTE	**40.6**	**11.7**	**10.5**	**6.7**	**85.2**	**50**	**1**	**42**	**20**	**35**
POLK	14.4	38.3	8.9	4.6	81.6	7	68	26	9	53
PULASKI	**46.9**	**41.1**	**10.9**	**8.8**	**85.6**	**69**	**82**	**43**	**55**	**31**
PUTNAM	30.6	40.6	18.0	6.9	88.8	27	81	89	22	18
RALLS	**40.0**	**26.1**	**14.9**	**4.3**	**81.2**	**46**	**19**	**69**	**5**	**57**
RANDOLF	70.9	38.4	18.6	12.3	68.3	106	71	94	97	108
RAY	**55.8**	**21.9**	**16.2**	**8.3**	**85.3**	**89**	**8**	**79**	**46**	**34**
REYNOLDS	44.2	57.5	15.8	11.5	77.4	62	109	76	94	77
RIPLEY	**57.8**	**58.6**	**20.6**	**9.3**	**83.3**	**92**	**111**	**101**	**66**	**44**
SALINE	67.2	39.5	15.4	16.2	75.8	100	77	73	109	88
SCHUYLER	**22.4**	**42.8**	**21.9**	**3.3**	**86.1**	**12**	**86**	**103**	**3**	**28**
SCOTLAND	42.3	35.3	20.4	6.8	95.3	54	53	100	21	6
SCOTT	**47.7**	**38.3**	**11.5**	**14.2**	**80.3**	**71**	**68**	**48**	**104**	**80**
SHANNON	32.2	62.1	23.3	9.2	82.7	32	113	105	63	48
SHELBY	**33.7**	**32.1**	**8.0**	**4.3**	**88.4**	**39**	**35**	**18**	**5**	**17**
ST. CHARLES	40.6	13.9	9.9	6.0	78.6	50	2	38	17	68
ST. CLAIR	**46.4**	**45.7**	**7.2**	**8.2**	**83.2**	**67**	**92**	**12**	**40**	**46**
STE. GENEVIEVE	43.4	32.4	6.6	8.9	92.8	61	39	8	56	9
ST. FRANCOIS	**58.6**	**35.4**	**18.3**	**11.1**	**73.6**	**95**	**55**	**91**	**87**	**86**
ST. LOUIS	69.0	25.4	5.9	7.6	82.0	101	14	4	31	51
ST. LOUIS CITY	**90.2**	**82.6**	**33.4**	**22.9**	**53.3**	**113**	**115**	**113**	**114**	**115**
STODDARD	20.7	34.3	7.0	12.7	84.0	11	48	11	99	41
STONE	**30.5**	**39.8**	**13.1**	**9.5**	**83.4**	**26**	**79**	**59**	**88**	**43**
SULLIVAN	39.8	41.1	12.6	11.3	89.7	44	82	57	91	15
TANEY	**64.9**	**33.5**	**32.2**	**7.9**	**77.7**	**99**	**45**	**111**	**36**	**71**
TEXAS	45.1	45.4	10.3	10.6	81.0	65	91	41	81	58
VERNON	**80.3**	**35.9**	**31.6**	**14.5**	**78.4**	**109**	**58**	**110**	**106**	**66**
WARREN	63.4	29.3	16.2	7.6	76.7	97	25	79	31	82
WASHINGTON	**31.2**	**48.3**	**20.7**	**17.0**	**76.4**	**29**	**97**	**102**	**111**	**84**
WAYNE	31.0	59.8	6.3	12.3	70.3	28	112	6	97	104
WEBSTER	**39.4**	**32.2**	**9.1**	**3.0**	**79.7**	**43**	**36**	**27**	**2**	**64**
WORTH	69.4	52.7	15.7	8.7	93.5	102	104	74	53	8
WRIGHT	**33.7**	**45.9**	**26.5**	**7.9**	**65.7**	**38**	**94**	**108**	**36**	**111**
MISSOURI	**53.5**	**33.3**	**13.7**	**10.7**	**76.9**					

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[1] KIDS COUNT Missouri 1994 Report
[2] Comparison of Missouri's 115 counties, 1 = best; 115 = worst
[3] Number of juvenile law referrals per 1,000 youth, 10-17, for criminal violations
[4] Percent of students enrolled in free/reduced lunch—eligibility based on income
[5] Number of "reason to suspect child abuse/neglect" reports per 1,000 children under 18
[6] Percent of total births to single teens
[7] Percent of 9th graders to complete high school in 4 years (estimate)
[8] Counties with lowest completion rates have worst (highest) rankings

Official statistics are helpful in revealing some of the causes and characteristics of child abuse. However, they represent an undercount of the actual incidence of abuse. A 1990 national study estimated that about 2.2% of American children had experienced abuse and neglect and that only about half of these incidents had been reported to a child protection agency (American Humane Association, 1994a). Other research suggests that underreporting may be even higher (Benson, 1993).

Child abuse and neglect can take a variety of forms including physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse consists of acts of physical violence against a child: hitting, punching, kicking, burning/scalding, severe spanking, shaking, imprisonment, physical endangerment (National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse, 1994).

Over 3,500 Missouri children were found to be victims of physical abuse in 1993, making it the second most common type of abuse (Missouri Department of Social Services, 1994). Victims of physical abuse were almost equally divided between boys and girls, with 52% being males and 48% females (Missouri Department of Social Services, 1994).

The rate of fatal child abuse has been on the rise nationally since 1985. About 55% of these fatalities are the result of physical abuse (McCurdy & Daro, 1994). Since 1989, Missouri has also documented a dramatic rise in the number of confirmed child fatalities from abuse and neglect. *(See Figure 5.)*

The recent creation of Child Fatality Review Teams in each Missouri county has resulted in a more thorough collection of data about this tragic problem. The teams have found that infants are the victims most likely to die as a result of abuse, and that 90% of children killed by abuse in 1992 were under age 5. Male children are more likely to be victims of fatal child abuse than female children (62% male; 38% female) (Missouri Department of Social Services, 1994).

Neglect

Child neglect is defined by the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse as "the withholding of or failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life: clothing, shelter, food, medical care, attention to hygiene, or adequate supervision" (NCPCA, 1994).

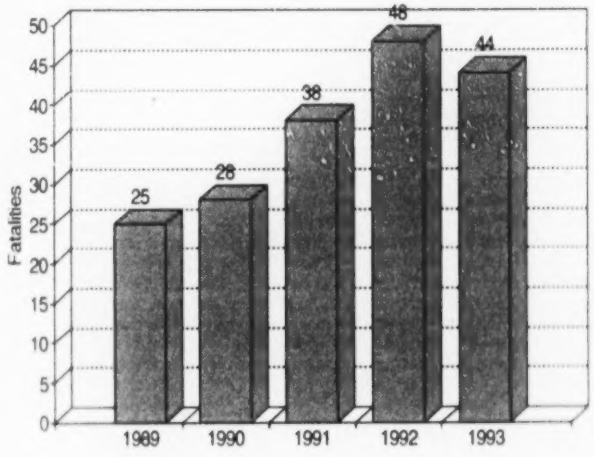
Neglect accounts for the largest percentage of child abuse in Missouri, with over 10,000 incidents substantiated in 1993. Fifty-one percent of victims were males, and 49% were females (Missouri Department of Social Services, 1994).

Child neglect can also have fatal consequences. Malnutrition, injuries due to inadequate supervision, and medical neglect are potentially life-threatening. Currently, Missouri statistics on fatal child abuse and neglect do not specify the type of maltreatment that caused the death. Nationwide estimates show that 40% of child abuse and neglect fatalities in 1993 were the result of extreme neglect (McCurdy & Daro, 1994).

Figure 5

Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities

Missouri 1989-1993



Sexual Abuse

In addition to penetration, sexual abuse may include exposing the genitals, fondling with clothes off or on, forcing or cajoling a child into performing manual or oral stimulation, or involvement in child pornography (NCPA, 1994).

Sexual abuse has received increased attention in recent years, leading to a surge in sexual abuse reports throughout the United States and Missouri. Despite the stereotyped image of the "stranger in the alley," most sexual assaults are committed by someone the child knows.

A recent Department of Justice study on child rape victims revealed that 96% of female victims under age 12 and 85% of female victims under age 18 were raped by someone they knew. One in five victims under twelve was raped by her own father (Langan & Harlow, 1994). In 1993, 2,753 Missouri children were found to be victims of sexual abuse (Missouri Department of Social Services, 1994). Girls are the primary victims of child sexual abuse; 77% of substantiated child sexual abuse victims in 1993 were female (Missouri Department of Social Services, 1994).

The actual incidence of child sexual abuse in the United States and in Missouri is unknown. For several reasons, sexual abuse is probably the most under-reported kind of child abuse (Daro, 1988). Sexual abuse tends to happen in secret, without any witnesses to corroborate the claims of the victim. In addition, perpetrators often manipulate, shame, or threaten their victims into silence.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse includes constant yelling or screaming at a child, making threats to a child, constant teasing or belittling, ignoring a child, or withholding affection and attention from a child. The National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse notes that much emotional abuse consists of what a parent does not do; it is a "failure to provide the understanding and nurturance necessary for a child's healthy psychological growth and development" (NCPCA, 1994).

In order for emotional abuse to be substantiated, the Division of Family Services must prove that the child has "substantially diminished psychological or intellectual functioning" that can be traced directly to the actions of a parent or adult caretaker. This proof requires examination by a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist, not simply the observations and assessment of the DFS investigative worker (Missouri Department of Social Services, 1994).

Emotional abuse was substantiated in only 1.9% of child abuse and neglect cases in Missouri in 1993 (Missouri Department of Social Services, 1994). National research shows that emotional maltreatment is usually substantiated only in combination with one of the other forms of abuse or neglect (McCurdy & Daro, 1994). Therefore, substantiated reports probably represent an undercount of the real incidence of emotional abuse.

Domestic Violence

"The psychological impact on children of witnessing violence is just as severe as if they had actually been victims of physical or sexual abuse themselves."

—Hope Hill, Violence Prevention Project, Howard University

Domestic violence occurs when an adult abuses his or her intimate partner. About 95% of the time, the victim is a woman and the perpetrator is a man (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1983). Domestic violence includes a horrifying spectrum of abuse, including hitting, punching, kicking, imprisonment, verbal abuse, injury or threat of injury with a weapon, sexual assault, psychological isolation, and murder. It is a common occurrence in many Missouri households.

According to the National Woman Abuse Prevention Project, 50% of all women will be in an abusive relationship at some point in their lives. Across the United States, domestic violence against women accounts for more injuries requiring treatment than rape, auto accidents, and muggings combined.

In Missouri, variations in reporting practices leads to an undercount of domestic violence incidents. The Missouri Department of Public Safety documents a 1993 rate of 657 such incidents per 100,000 population. Studies of homeless women, however, reveal a much grimmer picture. The Missouri Coalition Against Domestic Violence reports that in 1993, shelters in 27 counties provided refuge for 4,369 women and 5,151 children. Over 6,000 additional women were denied shelter due to a lack of space. Zorza estimates that 50% of all homeless people are women and their children fleeing violence in their homes.

Domestic violence terrorizes children. Witnessing violence against a parent is emotionally traumatic for a child, and children are likely to suffer additional consequences as a result of this trauma. Children who witness violence against their parents are more apt to suffer from health complaints such as ulcers and skin rashes, from emotional difficulties such as depression, anxiety, and sleep disorders, and from cognitive and speech/language disorders than children who have not witnessed domestic violence (Gelles and Straus, 1988).

- Nationwide, more than three million children each year witness the brutal victimization of a parent at the hands of an intimate partner (Straus, et. al., 1980, quoted in MCADV, 1994).
- At least 6.1% of all pregnant women are battered during their pregnancy. Women who are battered during pregnancy are less likely to seek prenatal care than those who are not (*Study on Battered Pregnant Women*, 1994).
- Children who witness domestic violence at home are 1,500% more likely to be abused by their mother's batterer than other children (National Woman Abuse Prevention Project, n.d.).
- Nationally, 75% of abused women state that their batterer has also abused their children (National Woman Abuse Prevention Project, n.d.).
- Domestic violence may also appear among teenagers in the form of physically, emotionally, or sexually abusive relationships. Teenagers may also be injured when attempting to stop the batterer from abusing their parent.

Another often unrecognized consequence of domestic violence is child abduction. Battering parents frequently use child abduction or the threat of it to terrorize their partners.

- 70% of child abductors in the United States are parents or individuals acting on behalf of the child's parents (Finkelhor, et al., 1990).
- Over 40% of child abductions occur between the legal separation and divorce of the children's parents (Finkelhor, et al., 1990).
- In 1990, 212 Missouri children were re-

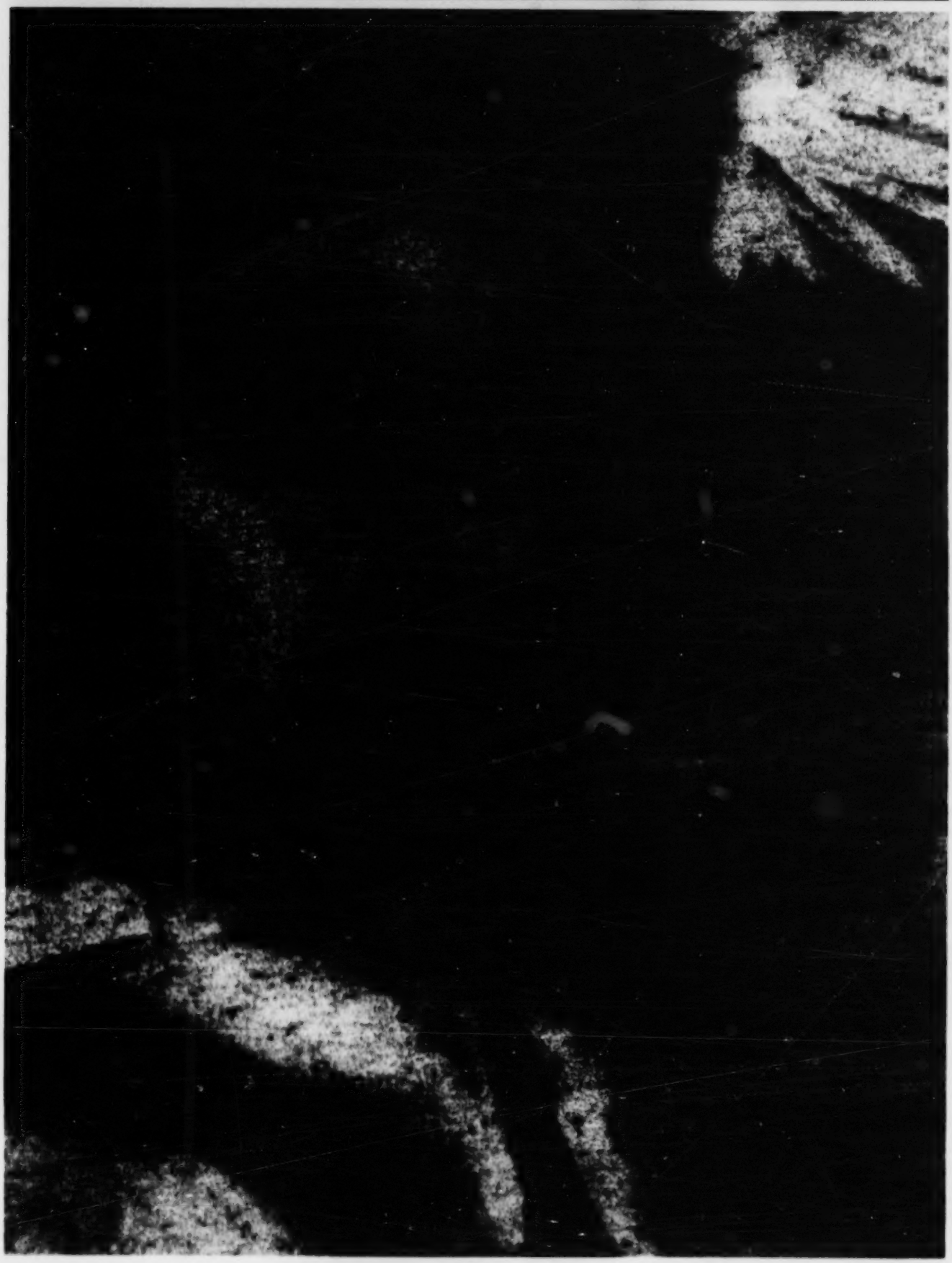
ported missing due to abduction (Finkelhor, et al., 1990).

Though the total number of child abductions is relatively small compared to other forms of family violence, it is nonetheless an issue of concern. Parental abduction of a child disrupts the fundamental routines of the child's life and escalates the cycle of violence against the child and his/her other parent.

Domestic violence and child abuse have been treated by social service and law enforcement agencies as two very separate occurrences. The reality, however, is that violence perpetrated against parents and children in the home is part of the same cycle of abusive power. Battered parents have children who are victimized by the batterer's violence.

"The unheard message is that children are living with battered women. They do not exist separately, nor is the impact of violence against women separate from violence against children. The same fists hit them both."

—Colleen Coble, Executive Director,
Missouri Coalition Against
Domestic Violence



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Characteristics of Families Experiencing Violence

Families that experience violence often share common characteristics. Obviously, they tend to have poor coping skills and high levels of stress. In addition many of these families are poor, have histories of prior family violence, and are socially isolated. Often substance abuse is involved. Finally, many violent families are headed by immature parents.

Rarely does only one kind of violence occur in a household. The existence of one form of family violence should be considered a risk factor for additional violence (Daro, 1988). For example, 70% of 900 children studied at battered women's shelters were themselves victims of physical abuse or neglect (National Woman Abuse Prevention Project, n.d.). Many fathers who perpetrate incest also abuse their wives.

Poverty

Although, family poverty is not necessarily a cause of child abuse or neglect, the high stress and lack of resources that result from poverty often lead to it. The connection between high poverty rates and high rates of abuse or neglect is particularly strong. Analysis of KIDS COUNT in Missouri 1994 data shows a correlation between these two factors. Counties with the highest rates of child abuse or neglect tend also to be the poorest counties. *(See Figure 4, pp. 16-17.)*

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse frequently plays a role in child abuse and domestic violence. Perpetrators may use their chemical dependency as an excuse for violent and exploitative behavior, or the use of drugs may lower inhibitions and increase the likelihood of a violent attack (Gelles & Straus, 1988). In 1992, a majority of the states reported that substance abuse was a major problem for families who had been reported for abuse and neglect (American Humane Association, 1994a). Researchers at the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse have also noted that substance-abusing parents may provide inconsistent parenting, be more likely to leave children unsupervised, and be more prone to depression and emotional instability (McCurdy & Daro, 1994).

In particular, addicted parents may place a higher priority on maintaining their addiction than on caring for children. A parent may be more likely to strike out in anger when he or she is drunk or high than when sober. A few addicted parents may involve children in criminal activity related to drug dealing or drug use. Substance abuse has a particularly disruptive effect on the stability of young children's living arrangements; 78% of young children in foster care in 1991 had at least one substance-abusing parent (U. S. General Accounting Office, 1994).

Prior Family Violence

The childhood experience of family violence is also linked to domestic violence in adult relationships. Many parents who were themselves abused become loving and supportive parents. However, a parent who has been abused may be more likely to have unmet emotional needs--and to turn to children to meet those needs inappropriately. Also, adults tend to parent the way they were parented. The experience of being parented consciously and subconsciously teaches ways of responding and defines parental roles. These can be "unlearned," but only with effort.

A recent article in the Child Protection Leader quoted evidence that "punitive family of origin" is the parental characteristic most strongly correlated with current abusive behavior (American Humane Association, 1994b). The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U.S. Department of Justice is conducting ongoing studies to examine whether children who are exposed to multiple forms of family violence are more likely to be violent. This study (based on self-report interviews and data collected from schools, social agencies, and law enforcement) showed that adolescents who had been victims of child abuse were more likely to commit violent acts than adolescents who were not abused. Similarly, self-reports of violence were higher by adolescents from homes in which domestic violence occurs, in which there is a general climate of hostility, or in which any child in the household is abused. The highest rates were reported by youth from families in which all three types of violence occur. *(See Figure 6.)*

Boys who grow up in violent households are not destined to become batterers, but they are statistically more likely to become batterers than boys from non-violent homes (National Woman Abuse Prevention Project, n.d.). More than 1,000 adults with substantiated abuse/neglect reports in Missouri in 1993 indicated that they had been abused as children (Missouri Department of Social Services, 1994). Studies indicate that female incest victims are at increased risk for victimization by their partners as adults.

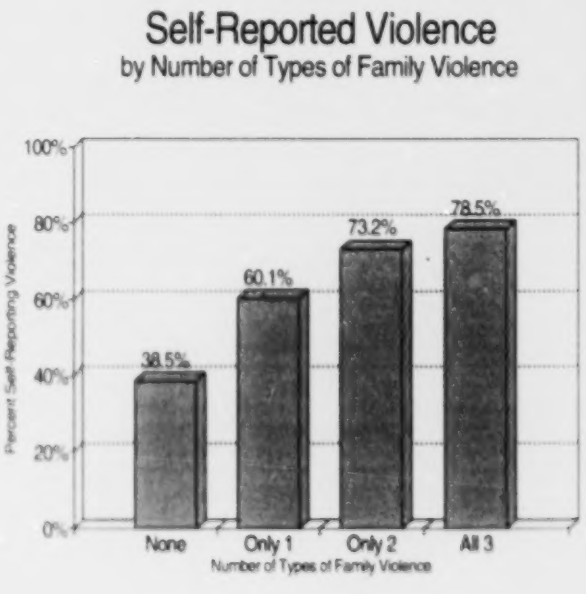
Immature Parents

Parents who are ill-prepared for the responsibilities of child rearing are at especially high risk of abusing their children. KIDS COUNT in Missouri 1994 data demonstrates a correlation between Missouri counties with high rates of births to single teens and counties with high rates of abuse and neglect. *(See Figure 4, pp. 16-17.)* Immature parents are not necessarily young in age, however. Many other parents have insufficient knowledge of child development, an inability to delay their own gratification, or lack the tremendous energy needed to parent positively, and may mistreat their children as a result. "Unrealistic expectations of child" was the most commonly reported characteristic of Missouri child abuse and neglect perpetrators in 1993 (Missouri Department of Social Services, 1994).

Social Isolation

Social isolation is an extremely common characteristic of families that experience violence. In cases of child abuse and neglect, it is not always clear whether the isolation causes the abuse, or whether the abusive family dy-

Figure 6



namic causes the isolation (Daro, 1988). Regardless of which causes which, isolated parents often lack social supports and informal help with child care responsibilities that other families depend on and take for granted (Daro, 1988). When young or inexperienced parents are isolated, they may not receive the information and feedback on their parenting that might help prevent neglect, inappropriate discipline, or their own victimization.

Perpetrators of domestic violence routinely isolate their victims from social contact with friends, family members, and supportive community institutions (Gelles & Straus, 1988). Such isolation renders child and adult victims of domestic violence particularly helpless. When a battered adult or abused child is held hostage in his or her own home or denied contact with friends and extended family, reaching out for help may be an impossibly dangerous task. In particular, abusive husbands have been known to lock their victims in the house, deny access to telephones, cut the victim off from all friends and family members, and force the victim to withdraw from all activities that do not focus on him.

Children in violent families need help, not only to heal from the damage caused by their abuse, but also to prevent the spread of violence from one generation to another. Family violence prevention efforts are unfortunately far too scarce, but Missourians are beginning to recognize the critical need to prevent domestic violence and child abuse.

Strategies to Prevent Family Violence

"I believe that we have to make the kids in this county our priority. If we don't invest in our kids, we're selling out the future of this town and this state."

—Andy Anderson, Dent County Presiding Commissioner

Family violence prevention programs in Missouri include everything from home visitation projects to art therapy groups. Like community violence prevention initiatives, programs to prevent family violence are diverse, but they also share common characteristics.

➲ Assessment of Family Needs and Strengths

Though families experiencing violence may share common characteristics, no two families will have exactly the same problems and needs nor the same strengths. Effective programs address the strengths and weaknesses of each unique family and its non-offending members.

➲ Recognition of Power and Control Dynamics

Successful programs recognize that family violence (including sexual violence) has little to do with love, intimacy, or sexuality. Instead, family violence is seen as an effort by the perpetrator to gain control over other family members. These programs aim to empower victims of family violence to regain safety, through education, advocacy, and services. Work with the perpetrators is focused on teaching offenders how to deal with anger, frustration, and stress in ways that are neither verbally nor physically violent and to increase their empathy for their partners and their children.

➲ Connection with Needed Resources

Family stress resulting from poverty, unemployment, or inadequate housing can increase the likelihood of abuse and neglect. Program success depends not only upon emotional healing, but also upon provision of basic necessities and access to tangible resources.

The Children's Trust Fund, the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and other organizations have supported the development of a number of outstanding family violence prevention programs. St. Martha's Hall has one of the oldest programs to prevent the intergenerational transmission of domestic violence. The Healthy Families Missouri Task Force is one of the newest and most promising efforts to reduce child abuse and neglect.

Children's Program, St. Martha's Hall, St. Louis

"We must focus our efforts on teaching children that violence is not acceptable or we will never stop the abuse of women and children."

—Helene Foster, St. Martha's Hall

The need to include children in the process of healing from domestic violence has long been a priority of St. Martha's Hall. The Children's Program at St. Martha's was begun ten years ago, in order to stop the transmission of violence from generation to generation. When children enter St. Martha's Hall, they are assessed to determine whether they have also been abused, and in what ways they have been affected by the abuse of their mothers. The children then attend special play and therapy groups to help them cope with the violence they may have witnessed and learn to express emotions in non-violent ways. In order to introduce children to an atmosphere of nonviolence, violent play is not accepted.

Counseling given to mothers in the shelter also emphasizes respect for children's needs. Mothers in St. Martha's are not permitted to use physical punishment or the threat of it while they are residents. They are offered counseling to help reinforce effective parenting and caregiving skills.

Because of the short-term nature of emergency shelter services, it is difficult for St. Martha's Hall to evaluate the effect of the Children's Program over the long term. However, the program addresses many of the factors that have been proven to contribute to the "handing down" of violence between generations. The 24-bed shelter provides a safe haven for approximately 120 women and 160 children annually. St. Martha's Hall receives funding from a variety of public and private sources.

Healthy Families Missouri Task Force, Missouri Chapter, National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse, Jefferson City

The Healthy Families Missouri (HFM) Task Force was formed by Missouri's chapter of NCPCA with the mission of developing universal, voluntary home visiting services throughout the state. One of sixteen state task forces, HFM includes representatives of state agencies, voluntary organizations, nonprofit social service agencies, and health care organizations.

The HFM Task Force promotes a specific model of home visitation services, Hawaii's Healthy Families. Hawaii's program has been extensively evaluated and has been found to reduce the likelihood that vulnerable parents will abuse their children. Its home visitors provide information and support to parents, make referrals to other needed services, and address parental practices that may be "red flags"--warnings of potential for abuse.

Healthy Families Missouri is working with communities in several regions of the state, developing a practice manual, conducting an interest survey, and enlisting a broad base of statewide support. By preventing child abuse before it starts, HFM aims to reduce rates of out-of-home placement, juvenile delinquency, youth substance abuse, and other social problems.

Conclusion

As we near the end of the 20th century, we are constantly reminded of the fact that our everyday world is expanding. New communication and transportation technology enables us to explore more of the world than ever before. The future depends on our ability to reach out, learn, and broaden our horizons.

Yet, for many of Missouri's children, stepping outside of their own front doors is a life-threatening act. Thousands of young Missourians risk violence in their classrooms and neighborhoods. Thousands more are not safe even in their own bedrooms. When our youngest citizens are left without basic safety or confidence in the ability of adults to protect them, they are often unable to learn, to grow, or to imagine a productive future.

It is the responsibility of every lawmaker, every advocate, every civic leader, every neighbor, and every parent to restore safety to Missouri's homes and communities. We already know enough to develop effective solutions to the vexing problems created by violence. We must now develop the will to turn this knowledge into reality.

Study Methods

Population

Our study data was gleaned from measures used in the KIDS COUNT in Missouri 1994 Report. Each of the 114 counties and the City of St. Louis was assessed on five different variables.

Variables

The study was based on a county-by-county analysis of five variables: juvenile crime, poverty, abuse/neglect, births to single teens, and high school completion. Raw data was obtained from and analyzed by the Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis at the University of Missouri.

Design

Variables were entered into a database and rank-ordered. A two-tailed correlational study was also performed, determining significance between each possible pair of variables. Significance was determined between all but one of the pairs (poverty and juvenile law violation referrals). Each significant pair exhibited a correlation coefficient of less than .05.

Variables were defined as follows:

Juvenile crime	Number of referrals per 1,000 youth, ages 10-17, to the juvenile court for criminal violations
Poverty	Percent of children enrolled in free/reduced school lunch; eligibility is based on family income
Abuse/Neglect	Number of "reason to suspect abuse/neglect" reports per 1,000 children under 18
Births to single teens	Percent of total births that are to single teens
High school completion	Percent of ninth graders who will graduate from high school in four years (estimate)

Correlation Coefficients

	Juvenile Crime	Abuse/ Neglect	High School Completion	Children in Poverty	Births to Single Teens
Juvenile Crime	1.0000	0.2486 p=.007	(0.2744) p=.003	0.0671 p=.476	0.4140 p=.000
Abuse/Neglect	0.2486 p=.007	1.0000	(0.1936) p=.038	0.4338 p=.000	0.3442 p=.000
High School Completion	(0.2744) p=.003	(0.1936) p=.038	1.0000	(0.2167) p=.020	(0.4094) p=.000
Children in Poverty	0.0671 p=.476	0.4338 p=.000	(0.2167) p=.020	1.0000	0.4564 p=.000
Births to Single Teens	0.4140 p=.000	0.3442 p=.000	(0.4094) p=.000	0.4564 p=.000	1.0000

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Program Contacts

- Ozarks Fighting Back
  Inter-Agency Task Force on Gangs and Youth Violence
  1111 South Glenstone, Suite 2-202
  Springfield, MO 65804
  417-863-7140

- Squash It! Program
  Kansas City Partnership for Children
  1055 Broadway, Suite 170
  Kansas City, MO 64105
  816-842-7643

- The Children's Program
  St. Martha's Hall
  P. O. Box 4950
  St. Louis, MO 63108
  314-533-1313

- Healthy Families Missouri
  Missouri Chapter, National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse
  308 East High Street, Suite 303
  Jefferson City, MO 65101
  314-634-5223

Missouri Resources

- Children's Trust Fund
  P. O. Box 1641
  Jefferson City, MO 65102
  314-751-5147
  (funding, technical assistance, and educational resources for child abuse prevention programs)

- Education Center on Family Violence
  3500 Giles
  St. Louis, MO 63116
  314-771-1116
  (training on a wide variety of issues related to all kinds of family violence: child abuse, domestic violence, and elder abuse)

- Missouri Coalition Against Domestic Violence
  331 Madison
  Jefferson City, MO 65101
  314-634-4161
  (advocacy on domestic violence issues; coordination of training and other activities for domestic violence agencies statewide)

- Missouri Division of Family Services
  Children's Services Unit
  P. O. Box 88
  Jefferson City, MO 65103
  Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline
  1-800-392-3738
  Office Phone: 314-751-3221
  (investigation of child abuse and neglect reports; referral to services)

- Missouri Juvenile Justice Association
  P. O. Box 1332
  Jefferson City, MO 65102
  314-634-636-6101
  (coordination of training and other activities for juvenile court personnel around the state; information on the juvenile court and policy issues related to juvenile justice)

- ParentLink
  212 Whitten Hall
  University of Missouri Extension
  Columbia, MO 65211
  800-552-8522
  (referral to parent support programs and other family services statewide)

Other Resources

- Committee for Children
  2203 Airport Way South, Ste. 500
  Seattle, WA 98134-2207
  800-634-4449
  (provides educational materials, original research, training, and community education for the prevention of child abuse and youth violence.

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We hope that the information and ideas contained in this report will encourage more communities to make Missouri a safer place for children.

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